



(U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall)

Securing Iraq one province at a time!

Soldiers from the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division, attached to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conduct their first mission in Diyala province, engaging anti-Iraqi forces in Baqubah, Iraq, March 14.

Cav leadership chats with Central Texas media

By Sgt. Joy Pariente
1st Cav. Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas - Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, deputy commanding general - support, 1st Cavalry Division, gave interviews exclusively to central Texas media outlets via live video feed from Baghdad March 13.

News agencies including NBC affiliate KCEN, Killeen Daily Herald, Austin American Statesman and Temple Daily Telegram gathered at the Fort Hood

Catering and Conference Center for the chance to find out how things are going for the 1st Cavalry Division downrange.

"This is a level of progress we've never seen before," Brooks said, in reference to current First Team operations in Baghdad and surrounding providences.

One such operation is their assistance in training Iraqi security forces. Soldiers have been helping repair and clean local training facilities to ready them for the incoming security personnel. Brooks shared the story of one Iraqi commander,

while watching Cav Soldiers at work, commented, "Look how they work together. Look how much they're getting done. Why can't our men be like that?"

And according to Brooks, the opinion of U.S. troops in the eyes of the Iraqi population is much like that commander's; positive. "There is a high degree of trust (from the Iraqi people)," Brooks said. "They view the coalition as fair and inde-

Central Texas gets update live from Baghdad

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pendent."

That fair view comes from the Army's equal treatment of Shiite insurgents and Sunni militias, Brooks said.

However, much of the First Team's

work isn't chasing down the bad guys, it is increasing local security and improving the functioning in their providences of responsibility.

"We're doing more interaction with the population than interaction with the enemy right now," Brooks explained. And that population interaction and the societal

rebuilding is augmented by Cav's "enablers" or the aviation, intelligence, civil affairs, psychological operations and other support groups attached to 1st Cavalry Division in Baghdad. "They're all as important as those who pull the triggers," Brooks said.

With all those additional assets, 1st Cavalry Division is the largest division ever deployed in the U.S. Army. Including their airborne and Stryker assets, 1st Cavalry Division, that leads Multi-National Division - Baghdad, commands nine Brigade Combat Teams, Brooks said.

The leadership of 1st Cavalry Division is planning to use all those Soldiers to the best of their ability to assist in handing off three of 1st Cav's providences by this summer, Brooks said. He explained that the handoff of the last area, Baghdad would take longer as it is the capitol city and the site of much hostility, but is planned for the fall at the earliest.

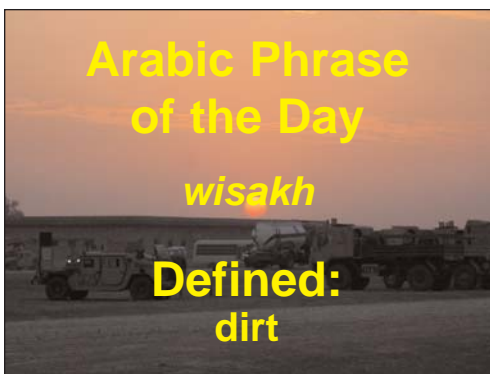
Brooks said there are many good reasons to be optimistic about what the 1st Cavalry Division is doing in Iraq, including the support of people back home and the hopes for peace from the Iraqis.




"We want them to live in peace and they want to live in peace," Brooks said.



(Photo by Sgt. Joy Pariente 1st Cav. Public Affairs)

Central Texas media outlets listen while Brig. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks speaks to them via live feed at the Fort Hood Catering and Conference Center March 13. Brooks' interviews were part of an open forum offered exclusively to central Texas journalists.



Iraq 3-Day Weather Report			
			
Today	Tomorrow	Sunday	
High: 64 Low: 55	High: 66 Low: 55	High: 70 Low: 52	

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(Photo by 1st Lt. Pete Evans 1-325 Abn.)

Capt. Douglas Rogers, Commander of Company D, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, talks to the Government of Iraq officials managing a fuel distribution point.

Paratroopers distribute fuel

**By 1st Lt. James Phillips
1-325 Abn.**

BAGHDAD - Each month the people of Kadamiyah, a northwest security district of the Iraqi capital, receive a monthly ration of fuel, sometimes however they aren't able to get enough. Allegedly, some locals will bribe the distribution point to get extra fuel, leaving others without an adequate amount.

Capt. Douglas Rogers, Commander, Company D, 1st Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, attached to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry

Division, wanted to get to the root of the problem and assisted with the security and distribution of fuel at a local fuel point in Kadamiyah on March 5.

As Delta Company began to tackle the distribution problem, Rogers and one of his platoons followed a propane truck to its distribution point.

To get a better understanding of their procedures, Rogers talked with the man responsible for distributing the fuel and the paratroopers of the company assisted in securing the fuel point while fuel was being distributed.

Baghdad in Brief

Assassination attempt on top Sadr City leader fails

BAGHDAD - Raheem Al Darraji, a top Sadr City civic leader, survived an attempted assassination when gunmen fired on the vehicle he was traveling in, wounding Al Darraji killing his driver and another passenger March 15.

Al Darraji was reported in good condition at a coalition medical facility.

After the attack occurred, Al Darraji was transported by members of the Iraqi National Police to the Sadr City Joint Security Station, where he received initial medical treatment. He was then evacuated by ground to a combat outpost operated by paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment. At the COP, Al Darraji continued to receive medical care until he could be safely evacuated by air to a treatment facility inside the Green Zone, a secure area inside the capital.

Al Darraji played an instrumental role in the negotiations that preceded the construction of the Sadr City JSS.

Suspected IED emplacer arrested in Rushdi Mullah

RUSHDI MULLAH, Iraq - Coalition forces arrested a suspected improvised explosive device emplacer north of Rushdi Mullah, Iraq March 14.

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment "Golden Dragon," 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry) arrested the individual after receiving a tip from an Iraqi civilian.

When the Soldiers searched the house that was believed to be the insurgent's hideout, they discovered eight local nationals, one of whom was arrested.

The seven other men were held for further questioning.

Maintenance ridding aircraft of "Battle Damage"

**By Capt. Peter Hathaway
1st ACB**

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - Upon completing a combat mission, an AH-64D Apache attack helicopter from the 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, returns home. The pilots complete a thorough, post-flight inspection when they discover a small hole and some peeled back metal with jagged edges in the stabilator, the tail wing of the aircraft - evidence of a bullet hole. It is apparent that the aircraft has sustained battle damage.

Upon hearing the words "battle damage," the aircraft maintainers of Company D "Bone Crushers," 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment "First Attack," 1st ACB, get right to work. Their mission is to minimize the time the aircraft is out of the fight.

This event occurred Christmas Day 2006. The Bone Crushers rapidly repaired the bullet hole in the aircraft's stabilator, and the Apache was back in the fight the next day.

"We're the ones that put band-aids

on bullet holes and repair the stress on the air frame," said Reaford, N.C., native Daniel Capers, an aircraft structural repairer from Co. D.

"Doing a repair on the aircraft like that can take a long time - it takes a pretty good team to get in there and knock all that out quickly," Capers said.

The Bone Crushers know their hard work is vital to keeping the Apaches in the air and, in turn, know how important airborne Apaches are to the ground forces, said Buffalo, N.Y., native Spc. Brett Bolt, an aircraft power plant mechanic for the Bone Crushers.

"The Apache is basically the infantry soldier of the air. If our birds are down, that means [the troops on the ground] are not getting the help they need out there," said Bolt.

So the maintenance crews work hard to keep the aircraft mission capable. Maintenance and inspections are constantly completed in order to keep Apaches in the air.

But when an aircraft is damaged and cannot fly back to the forward operating base, someone has to go to the helicop-

ter. That is when the Downed Aircraft Recovery Team springs into action.

"They are like a quick reactionary force, but for the maintenance aspect. They are the ones that go out there and do battle damage repair - just enough to get [the helicopter] up in the air and right back home," Capers said.

The DART has flown to several FOBs in order to repair damaged aircraft. Each time the team removed and reinstalled a main rotor blade in under an hour, quickly getting the aircraft back into the fight.

First Attack's Armament repairers are another busy group of maintainers. It is their responsibility to keep the weapons systems operational-a never-ending task, but without operational weapons an Apache is ineffective, said Wichita, Kan., native Spc. Bret Gibson an armament, avionics and electronics repairer with the Bone Crushers.

In addition to repairing the systems, they ensure that upon return from a mission, expended ordnance and flares are rapidly replaced and the aircraft is ready for another mission, he said.



(Photo by Spc. Nathan Hoskins 1st ACB Public Affairs)

As a structural repairer, native Daniel Capers of Company D," 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, works on the skin of the aircraft to make sure it is ready to go into battle.

2-2 MiTT: Upclose and personal

By Spc. Courtney Marulli
2-2 Inf. Public Affairs

COMBAT OUTPOST, EAST BAGHDAD, Iraq -Soldiers with Military Transition Teams work and fight alongside Iraqi security forces everyday, working to bring security to the capital.

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division's MiTTs are comprised of Soldiers from all over the brigade, and they work with the 2nd Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division in eastern Baghdad.

When something occurs in their area of operation, Soldiers in the MiTT don't have to watch television to get the news, but simply go to the rooftop and watch the events unfold, reminding troops just how close they are to the fighting.

Lt. Col. Edward Taylor, the MiTT Chief for the 2-6 IA, said a MiTT is important, as the key to the transition toward Iraqi stability and security is for the country to have competent Iraqi security forces.

"The reason the MiTT, (National Police Transition Teams) and (Police Transition Teams) teams were created, was to enable this transition from U.S. in the lead to ISF in the lead," he said. "They were created to fill this critical need, because the brigade combat teams and battalions are still focused on security operations. The transition teams' focus is on the Iraqi units."

Taylor, of Colorado Springs, Colo., said that would mean having effective Iraqi Army, National Police, and Iraqi Police forces that can take over the security requirements from U.S. forces and run operations on their own.

"The transition teams help the Iraqi units increase their capa-



(Photo by Spc. Courtney Marulli 2-2 Inf. Public Affairs)

Recruits in the 2nd Bde., 6th IA Div. fall into formation Feb. 3 in Baghdad. The U.S. 2nd Bde., 2nd Inf. Div. Military Transition Team lives on the Iraqi compound in order to work directly with the Iraqi Army to show them tactics and procedures.

bility by coaching the Iraqi commanders and NCOs on successful leadership, training, planning and management techniques," he said. "Our goal is not necessarily to make them a mirror image of the U.S. military but simply help them be a force that fits their society and is capable of beating the anti Iraqi forces militias and terrorists and securing the Iraqi people."

The MiTT Soldiers come from a variety of military occupational specialties, and they draw upon their job training to work as advisors and mentors to the Iraqi Army.

Sgt. Levi Calhoun, an infantryman, said when he first joined the MiTT, it was different for him because he now had to rely on other military occupational specialties to help keep him alive when he went outside the wire.

"It took a month, but I trust these guys as much as my old unit," he said.

Calhoun, of Electra, Texas,

is on his third deployment, but this time he has the opportunity of really working with the Iraqis.

"In 2003, we worked with the Iraqis, but back then it was the Iraqi National Guard," he said. "But this is different as we live with them and make that relationship."

The language barrier hasn't been much of a problem, Calhoun said, as one can explain what they want to the Iraqis. However, if needed, there are interpreters with the MiTT. "It's not how it was back in 2003 because we had one interpreter for the company," he said.

Calhoun said the Iraqis have come a long way from when he first time he worked with them. "Back then it was chaos," he said. "Now there's a little bit of order."

The Iraqi Army receives plans and executes missions. They lead the missions instead of having the U.S. lead them, Calhoun said.

Before working on the

MiTT, Calhoun said his mindset was to do his job and go home. "Now that I live with them, I think we, as a group, are helping to stabilize a chaotic country," he said.

Pfc. Daniel Roodzant, a truck driver, is one MiTT team member who appreciates the experience he has by working directly with the Iraqis.

"To change from an unorganized group of people to an effective organized group," he said.

That is an important function, as someone has to help facilitate change.

"It's not about being important," he said. "It's about being vital and essential."

But it's not just the United States helping the Iraqis, the Iraqis help U.S. operations because they know the back roads, the markets and the city, Roodzant said. "It's like a mutual relationship," he said.